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WORKERS AT COLLEGES STRIKE; DISPUTE IMPEDES HILL SERVICES

Workers lining College Hill Road outside main entrance.

Pickets Out Since Midnight Monday, Talks Falter After Several Months

BY BOB WEISSER

Members of Local 200, Service Employees International Union, went on strike against Hamilton and Kirkland Colleges late Sunday night. The strike was to have officially started at midnight Monday, but was moved up an hour because of reports that non-union workers planned to come to work earlier than their twelve o'clock starting time in order to avoid the pickets.

The people on the picket lines were intent on showing the importance of their demands. Several of them said that they had been "pushed around enough in the past," and that they were going to make a determined effort to stand this year.

The conflict has taken several months to reach this stage. The contract for the workers (the union acts as the bargaining agent for all workers) ran out on June 15. Since then, negotiations have been in progress; there have been face-to-face talks and then mediation for the last several sessions. Several points have been resolved by these negotiations, and other problems have emerged as major hurdles to a settlement.

J. Martin Carovano, acting president and provost of Hamilton, sent a message to all members of the Hamilton-Kirkland community explaining the developments up to the time of the strike and the college's position on the remaining issues. Carovano said, "in the many matters discussed in negotiations thus far, agreement has been reached – with two exceptions – on virtually all issues." These issues include the vacation program, number of holidays, pension plan, sick leave procedures, leave for death in the family, and the probationary period.

Unresolved Matters

The two matters that had not been resolved were the union shop and the wage package. The union added one other, lesser problem: personal days.

The school's argument against the union shop is based on the belief that the people that are connected with an institution of higher learning should be allowed to have various options open to them. The concept of a union shop would defeat this policy, the college argues, because it would force the workers to join the union, even if they did not want to do so.

The union claims that a union shop would put an end to any favoritism towards non-unionists that the union says has or may occur. Such a shop would also resolve the issue of the non-union workers getting the same benefits as the union employees, while not having to pay the union dues, which are $60 per year.

The expired contract stated: "Any present employee who does not belong to the Union and any future employee shall have the right to join or not to join the Union without such decision affecting his employment status."

The college would like to keep that same condition, whereas the union would like to change to either a union shop, a modified union shop, or an agency shop. An agency shop would require all employees to pay the dues, but not necessarily to the union. Consequently, they would be under no obligation to the union.

College Offered Wage Hike

The wage package that the college has offered is a total raise of 40 cents divided equally over two years. The union demand comes to 50 to 60 cents over two years. The discrepancy is larger than is readily apparent because the college wants to give the increases in increments every half-year, while the union wants the raise to be given in a lump sum. As a result, the college's true yearly increase would be 16 cents, and the union's would be 25 to 30 cents.

The third point is the personal days. These days would be used by the employees to take care of any personal business or appointments that they may have. They would be paid for these days, instead of having to take a day off of their vacation time or sick leave.

Other colleges have these days for their employees. Syracuse, Colgate, and St. Lawrence Universities all have two personal days, and St. Lawrence will have three per year in 1974. In fact, according to Sam Villani, secretary-treasurer of Local 200, Hamilton is the only school in New York State that does not have any personal days.

The issue of personal days, along with others, such as an improved health paln, are considered by the union to be important demands, but not as important as the union shop and the wages. In effect, these less-salient items could be used as trade-off items in exchange for a better deal on wages or the closed shop.

Throughout the negotiations, both sides stressed that a strike was an undersirable solution to the dispute. However, the talks became so stalled over union security and wages that the union decided to walk out. At a meeting held Friday, the union members voted unanimously to strike.

Drivers Honor Picket Lines

The number of union workers is 52 out of 75 eligible employees, and for the past three days, only those non-union workers and supervisors (who are not covered by the contract) have been taking care of the campuses. Essential services, such as garbage disposal,

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Walkout Slows Deliveries; Food Services Prepared

BY ROBERT ROCK

Students, faculty members, touring families, and even non-union workers were surprised on Veteran's Day morning by picket signs in the hands of striking Hamilton-Kirkland maintenance men and women greeting them at the major entrance roads to the campus. Reactions ranged from complacency to bafflement, and many people questioned the strikers on the strike's causes and its ramifications. The major cause for concern was the possibility that the strike would impede the normal operation of the college. This is the ultimate goal of the striking union members.

Though their spirits are high, the strikers are not confident of immediate success. In fact, when some inquisitive students talked to picketers early Monday morning, a number of them jokingly suggested that students should "stuff paper down the toilet" so that problems for any non-striking workers would mount. The underlying reason for the dismay is a prime factor in the negotiations with the college administration – only two-thirds of the school's workers are union members, and, therefore, a third of them are remaining on the job during the strike. Twenty-one workers (approximately one third) showed up for work on the first day of the strike.

Both the striking force and the administration said they anticipated more "drop-outs" as the strike progresses. Also, one of the spokesmen for the union, Donald Moore, believes that once "people in higher places [referring to the Board of Trustees and major fund contributors] get wind" of the strike, further action towards a settlement will occur. Publicity of the strike has been aided by local television and radio news coverage.

The strikers are also uncertain of the student support they hope to receive, chiefly because most students have been away for the four day weekend. Emerson Literary Society allowed the union to pitch two tents in their

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Bill Lambdin '73 interviews striker for WUTR-TV.

Union vs. College: A Case of Power Politics

News Analysis

The negotiations between Hamilton College and Local 200 of the Service Employees' International Union, and the resultant walkout, are the cause of much confusion. The confusion stems not only from the lack of knowledge of the problem on the part of the community, but also from the conflicting reports that one gets from either of the two parties involved.

Two examples illustrate this problem. When asked his opinion of the college's offer to make the pay increase for the skilled employees higher than for the unskilled workers, Charles Duffy, representative of the union, said, "They haven't told us about it." And when George Newman, public-relations officer of Hamilton, was asked about the college's views on a suggestion by the union for marathon bargaining sessions, he said, "Have they brought that up at the negotiations?"

These examples do not imply that nobody knows what anybody is talking about, but rather that the two sides concentrate on different issues. The examples could also be a result of the type of negotiations being used. The two groups were using a mediator before the strike, and will probably continue with him during the walkout. Most of the bargaining is not done face-to-face. Instead, the mediator acts as a go-between, and is the only person who knows everything that each side is saying. Therefore, it is possible for one side to advance an idea which will be given to the other party in an abbreviated form.

The consequences of having a union shop are quite important. If the union does achieve it, the balance of power within the colleges will shift. The union will have considerably more bargaining power, because they will be able to have 100 percent of the work force out in case of a strike. This would create many more problems than the current strike will, with only two-thirds of the

Therefore, it is in the interests of the college to oppose a union shop. However, the official reason for opposing it is somewhat weaker than it could be. The reasoning is rather narrow, in that the school wants to give the workers freedom of choice within the framework of the school only. In a larger framework, the life of the workers and their families, their choices are limited not by their membership in any union, but by their low pay and rising cost of living.

The union also has its official reasons for wanting a union shop. They are valid, as are the administration's, but they also mask the real reason for the union shop. One of the arguments that the union uses in favor of the union shop is that it will not cost the college any money. But while it is true that the implementation of the union shop will cost nothing, the wages and benefits that the college will have to give in the future will cost much more than they will without a union shop.

This is not to say the union is making inordinate demands. Its claim that Hamilton is way behind other colleges in wages and benefits is justifiable in some cases. The wages for unskilled labor here is comparable to other schools, but the rates for skilled labor compare poorly.

The average wage for unskilled labor at Hamilton is about $3.00 an hour; for skilled labor, it is about fifty cents higher. At St. Lawrence University, the unskilled labor wage is about the same as it is at Hamilton, but the skilled employees wage is about fifty center an hour more.

An important consideration is what the employees will get out of the strike. It would seem that the attainment of a union shop is essential to their hopes for better wages. If the strike fails, it will be much harder to gain a union shop in subsequent negotiations, especially if the members lose faith in their union.

In a way, this strike is almost a do-or-die proposition for the union, for if it cannot get its demands with less than 70 percent of the workers on the picket lines, what will happen if the membership declines, as it has recently?

It might seem that the college is in a good position to weather this walk-out, since one-third of the employees are still working. However, there are certain intangibles that are involved that give the strikers a needed boost.

Primarily, the union members have a great feeling of solidarity. They believe that they have continually gotten bad contracts, and that this is the year that changes will be made. The matter of favoritism, although not substantiated with concrete evidence, adds to the members' solidarity.

If the strike continues longer than a few weeks, it may well have a good chance of succeeding. Various supplies that the colleges have accumulated, especially oil, will not be replenished because the drivers will not cross the picket lines.

Another "if" in the plans of both the administration and the union is faculty and student support. Although not necessarily a deciding factor, enough pressure can be brought to bear to swing the decision either way. The reaction of the students and faculty to any shortages or inconveniences will be important in deciding to whom they will give their support.

The major issue in the strike is one of power. The union wants a larger share in deciding what benefits its members will get, and the school does not want to give them as much leverage as they are asking for. As for the strike, it is a waiting game. Whoever can hold out the longest, whoever has more nerve, will probably gain most of their objectives. An instrumental part in the game is who has more reserves. Will the college run out of essential materials before the union strike fund runs out? That is one of the most salient questions in the strike, should it continue.

—B.W.

Around The Picket Lines

Strikers Address The Issues

BY DOUG GLUCROFT

It was a chilly Sunday night at 11:30, but several men and two women were already forming pickets. When the morning shift arrived, many students and other members of the college community became aware that a strike had begun.

Shortly after the pickets had formed, members of the Emerson Literary Society brought out some hot coffee for the strikers. ELS also permitted the union to pitch two tents on the front lawn of the house. One tent is now equipped with coffee and other amenities.

Besides demonstrating their grievances, the strikers, yelling "slow down" or "hey, what's your rush?", helped to direct the early morning flow of traffic in and out of the main entrance to Hamilton.

Some of the workers are blunt in their criticism of the college. One night janitor said, "I bid for that library job [referring to the new Daniel Burke Library] and they gave it to a new, non-union worker. I have nothing against non-union workers, but I've been here three or four years." It is a common complaint among union workers that non-union workers get the better jobs at the colleges.

"Just stuff toilet paper down your toilet and throw that garbage out the front window," said one custodian last Friday in anticipation of this week's walkout. At one point, three Hamilton students approached the men picketing and asked for some signs. Once they had them they ran down the entrance road to Kirkland College and protested in behalf of the striking workers.

"We need 100 percent student support for this strike. When this happened at St. Lawrence, the students and faculty really lent a hand," said one of the strikers.

"Money is the most important to us. We earn $6200 a year and when we go into the store we pay the same thing for a loaf of bread as the guy who takes home $15,000." Although the union shop is an important issue, many strikers are feeling the effect of rising food prices, and wages are a vital consideration for them.

The men and women expressed disappointment about their relations with Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds Gerald Leuiken. Two strikers had the same comment about their boss: "He never says good morning to any one of us." Another janitor said, "I never see the guy but once a month."

On Monday afternoon, the strikers directed shouts of "Scab!" towards some of the workers on the job. Many of the workers who have not joined the strike now take back roads to and from the Hill to avoid confrontation with the picketers.

Colleges Prepared For Walk-out; Union Sets Up Emergency Fund

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are being performed, but most operations have been suspended or curtailed.

Both sides were reasonably prepared for the strike. Over the weekend, the schools built up their supplies of food and other items. Water supplies are no problem, but heating may be, in the event of a prolonged strike. Most delivery truck drivers are honoring the picket lines, and until the strike is over, the colleges will have to do their own transporting of food and materials.

The union is prepared to meet the loss of pay that its members will sustain. It has an emergency strike fund, and the workers will become eligible for unemployment compensation after a certain number of weeks. Despite these cushions, the strikers will lose approximately one-third of their usual pay.

To date, there have been no new negotiating sessions scheduled. Yesterday morning, union representative Duffy said he hoped that there would be a meeting that afternoon. A meeting was never held. George Newman, public relations director of Hamilton said,"We think it's up to the mediator, Joseph Gentile, to call a meeting. We do not feel that it is up to us to initiate new negotiations."

Despite the failure of previous negotiations, both sides expressed great interest in reopening meaningful negotiations in order to end the strike and produce an agreement amenable to both parties.

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Strikers Attempt To Disrupt Hill Services

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front yard, but this has been the only appreciable student contribution to the strike. "It's unfortunate that our strike fell on these vacation days," said Charles Duffy, the local representative for the striking union, "but we couldn't put the date off any longer."

The students will soon be made aware of the strike, if they aren't already. First among their problems will be the handling of linen, for the trucks of the laundry service on which many students depend turned around yesterday when spokesman Moore discussed the matter with Wayne Smith, the co-owner of Smith's Laundry Service. Although Smith argued that the contract was strictly between the student and the laundry service, Moore reiterated that no trucks should cross the lines, citing that such an action would impede the "momentum" that the strike has obtained since its outset.

The trucks, after delivering to only the Thomas Rudd Health Center, drove away under the supervision of the picketers. Later, when questioned about the lack of service, Smith said, "It is my understanding that Hamilton is on vacation; we don't deliver on vacations." Therefore, students will not receive last week's laundry until next Tuesday.

Earl D'Aprix, food service director for Hamilton-Kirkland, also foresaw little or no problem as far as his dining facilities are concerned. His storage rooms are "bulging at the seams" with enough food to last the next three weeks. When truck drivers carrying food supplies refused to cross picket lines, D'Aprix drove the shipment in himself with a college truck. He expects to do this several more times before the strike is over, but he insisted this will be his only problem. None of his staff are union members.